Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and forty-sixth plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 26 February 2018, at 3.05 p.m.

President: Ms. Veronika Bard ..... (Sweden)

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The President: I call to order the 1446th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, this afternoon we shall continue the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament that started this morning. It is a great joy to welcome our very distinguished guest, Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and, afterwards, His Excellency Mr. Ignazio Cassis, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

Allow me first to inform you about a matter that has come to our attention and that is that a work stoppage will take place today from 3 to 5 o'clock. However, since it is such an honour to have Secretary-General Guterres with us today and in light of his presence, I suggest that we continue with the plenary session with the interpretation that is at hand, so as to allow for the Secretary-General to deliver his statement. If I do not hear otherwise, we will go ahead and I will now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

Mr. Guterres (Secretary-General of the United Nations): Madam President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I must apologize because I am going to do one of the most impolite things that can be done, which is, after speaking, I have to leave. The reason is that I absolutely must be in New York tonight. The last plane to go from Europe to New York is from London and I had everything scheduled to leave Geneva at 5 o'clock, but British Airways cancelled the flight and so I have to take an earlier flight. This forces me to leave the room immediately after I talk, so I am terribly sorry. It is extremely impolite, but it is British Airways' fault, not mine.

Excellencies, it is a great honour to be here. I thank you for your work and particularly for the serious efforts you have made, including this year, to find ways to break the long-standing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament. I welcome the decision you took 10 days ago to take forward your substantive work. The most difficult part now lies ahead, as you work to translate this into the resumption of negotiations.

Disarmament and arms control are top priorities for me, and they are central to the system for international security agreed in the United Nations Charter. The dangers of nuclear weapons are all too clear. They pose a catastrophic risk to human life and to the environment.

There is great and justified anxiety around the world about the threat of nuclear war. In East Asia, millions of people face this threat up close on a daily basis. I commend their patience and resilience, which I witnessed first-hand during my visit to the Republic of Korea earlier this month.

We have seen some positive developments over recent weeks. I welcome the courageous initiatives taken by the Republic of Korea during the Olympic Games. But this is not enough. We need lasting improvements, based on the central objective of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and sustainable peace in the region.

I also welcome the completion of reductions by the United States and the Russian Federation under the New START Treaty. We need further disarmament and arms control measures as a sound basis for global peace. The Conference on Disarmament is a critical global forum for progress.

(*spoke in French*)

Distinguished colleagues, actions undertaken in the areas of disarmament and arms control have brought about significant progress. These actions have led to a reduction in stockpiles of strategic nuclear weapons and the complete prohibition of chemical and biological weapons. They have also given rise to agreements prohibiting and restricting the use of indiscriminate weapons, including landmines and cluster munitions. However, the first General Assembly resolution, which calls for the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, has not yet been implemented, and there are now some 150,000 nuclear weapons in the world. The danger inherent in these weapons was undoubtedly a driving force behind the drafting of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was opened for signature last year. In recent years, some long-standing goals, such as decreasing military expenditure and reducing the size of armed forces, have been

abandoned. Military might is exalted and glorified while the shocking cost of conflict in human terms is overlooked. At the same time, the global arms trade is more active now than at any time since the cold war, stoking regional conflicts. Global military spending still exceeds $1.5 trillion per year. Tensions that undermine progress on non-proliferation are also resurfacing. Countries cling to the fallacious notion that nuclear weapons make the world safer. Some non-State actors, including terrorists, constitute an extremely serious threat to global disarmament efforts. In addition, scientific and technological advances are accelerating the development of new types of autonomous and remote-controlled weapons that push the boundaries of normative frameworks. Consideration is now being given to the possibility of using nuclear weapons as tactical combat weapons, which is an extremely dangerous prospect. In the meantime, war has left the battlefield to enter the hearts of towns and villages. Governments and non-State armed groups are using powerful explosive devices in populated areas, killing more and more civilians. Weapons of war are sold and marketed as ordinary consumer products and taboos surrounding the use of chemical weapons and nuclear testing have been challenged on a number of occasions. In the face of such a deteriorating situation, the international community urgently needs a new common vision of disarmament and arms control.

(*spoke in English*)

Madam President, Excellencies, in response to these concerns, I am preparing, in support of Member States, a new initiative aimed at giving greater impetus and direction to the global disarmament agenda. This initiative is aimed at restoring the role of disarmament as an integral component of our work to maintain international peace and security. I believe we can build a new vision for disarmament to address today's priorities: conflict prevention, upholding humanitarian principles, promoting sustainable development and dealing with future threats.

On prevention, we must respond to the dangers of the overaccumulation and proliferation of weapons, and reinforce the need to integrate disarmament into United Nations efforts on preventive diplomacy and peacemaking. At the global level, we must work towards forging a new momentum on eliminating nuclear weapons.

On humanitarian action, we need to focus on the growing and unacceptable impact of conventional weapons on civilians and infrastructure, particularly in urban areas, which also represents a clear violation of human rights. We need to focus on disarmament that saves lives.

On sustainable development, we need to strengthen the links between disarmament and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, reduce the illicit arms flows that feed conflict and divert resources, and understand the dire economic consequences of excessive military spending.

Finally, we need to examine the potential risks and challenges posed by the weapons of the future. This includes the relationship between new technologies – autonomous and unmanned weapons, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and space-based systems – and international humanitarian and human rights law.

My initiative will strive to offer a new perspective on traditional priorities, a clear vision for the future, and practical and implementable actions.

The challenges are enormous, but history shows that it has been possible to reach agreement on disarmament and arms control even at the most difficult moments.

I have asked my High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to reach out to a broad spectrum of actors to develop this initiative further, including all partners within the United Nations system, leading experts, Member States and civil society.

Madam President, Excellencies, disarmament and arms control are complex projects comprising many small steps. Each one affects the whole. Each gas attack, each nuclear test takes us into greater danger. We cannot contemplate further erosion of the global framework for disarmament. Indeed, we must reverse it urgently. We must bring the current review process of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to a successful outcome in 2020. This cornerstone treaty must remain strong for non-proliferation, disarmament and the

peaceful use of nuclear power. We must bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force without delay. We must enforce the Chemical Weapons Convention and ensure accountability for violations. We must reinvigorate the agenda for disarmament and arms control and put it back on course. We must work together towards our common goal: a world free of nuclear weapons.

As Secretary-General, I am committed to doing everything within my authority to contribute to the success of the Conference on Disarmament. In turn, I ask you to intensify your efforts to find consensus on the way forward. I believe you are off to the best start in nearly two decades, and I look forward to building on this new momentum.

The President: I thank Mr. Guterres for his statement and for his active engagement in disarmament. Let me say at this stage that we very much regret that interpretation is not being provided today between 3 and 5 o'clock due to a work stoppage; however, the speech by the Secretary-General is available on the web page of the United Nations, and the speech by His Excellency Mr. Ignazio Cassis, Foreign Minister of Switzerland, will be distributed in English, although it will be delivered in French.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ignazio Cassis, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

Mr. Cassis (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Distinguished colleagues, I am very pleased to be here with you in Geneva, the international heart of dialogue and peace. It is an honour for me to speak after the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I welcome his clear message and echo the call for change that he has addressed to this Conference. My country, Switzerland, fully supports the goal of reviving disarmament efforts and revitalizing disarmament bodies. We look forward to the disarmament agenda announced by the Secretary-General. We encourage him to take ambitious and targeted measures. Disarmament is in need of a new impetus and new leadership. The international security situation is more volatile now than it has been since the end of the cold war. In a multipolar and fragmented world, the trend is towards rearmament rather than disarmament. This situation is troubling.

Today, I would like to mention four challenges that we must face together. The first concerns the growing risk of nuclear confrontation. Nuclear-related tensions and threats are becoming major concerns for the international community. Chief among those concerns is the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We call on this country to comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions and to cease all development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. It is high time for all the actors concerned to reduce nuclear risks and avert the threat of confrontation. Switzerland is convinced that, in addition to the application of sanctions and political pressure, dialogue must be maintained in order for a political solution to be reached. We welcome the emerging dialogue between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and encourage efforts to involve other actors in that dialogue. Switzerland stands ready to facilitate such discussions if the parties so wish. The fear of nuclear war is not only related to the situation on the Korean peninsula. Nuclear-weapon States are modernizing and renewing their arsenals. My message in this regard is clear: we need to prevent a new nuclear arms race. We do not need more weapons; we need more dialogue. We must oppose any lowering of the threshold on the use of nuclear weapons and ensure, instead, that using nuclear weapons becomes even more unthinkable. The task of creating a safe world without nuclear weapons is a daunting one. Switzerland is under no illusions. Achieving this goal will not be easy but we must pursue it without respite. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of using nuclear weapons should prompt us to redouble our disarmament efforts. It is essential to the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons never be used again under any circumstances.

The weakening of existing norms constitutes a second challenge. The prohibition of the use of chemical weapons has been undermined by the repeated use of these weapons in the Syrian conflict. The international community must provide a strong and collective response. The outcomes of the investigations conducted in Syria are clear. We must now take steps to combat impunity in order to strengthen legislation banning the use of chemical weapons. The agreement on Iran's nuclear programme is under strain. We stand by all

those who continue to support and implement this important agreement. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty is also facing difficulties. We call on the parties to respect this arms reduction agreement, which has proved essential to stability in Europe. Lastly, there are worrying signs that nuclear-weapon States are backtracking on agreed disarmament measures. The credibility of these commitments is essential to preserving the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. A rules-based international order contributes to everyone's security. The protection of this order is a priority for Switzerland.

The third challenge relates to the humanitarian impact of weapons on civilians in armed conflicts. While we are gathered here, the horrors of war are engulfing children, women and men in a suburb of Damascus. Many innocent victims are being murdered there. Hospitals, medical staff, patients and humanitarian workers who attempt to save lives are the targets of attacks. Collective action is absolutely essential to strengthen respect for the implementation of international humanitarian law. We must provide greater protection to the victims of armed conflict, whether they are men, women or children. Switzerland welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018) last Saturday and calls on all parties to implement it immediately. In the words of the Secretary-General, we need to take practical and preventive measures to save human lives from the ravages of war.

The fourth challenge concerns the many security implications of technological progress. Artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, biochemistry and genetics will greatly benefit human development but will also lead to the invention of new weapons and change the nature of wars. We must discuss global governance frameworks if we are to guide these developments. Arms control is only one aspect of global action. The Secretary-General is best placed to launch a United Nations system-wide initiative to prevent the misuse of those technologies and we look forward to his next report on the matter.

If we are to meet these challenges, we need an effective multilateral system that can build a climate of trust and prevent conflict and humanitarian crises. This requires a more functional disarmament mechanism. The Conference on Disarmament plays a special role in this mechanism. It must live up to its responsibilities. The lack of progress made by the Conference in priority areas such as the development of a fissile material treaty, nuclear disarmament or the prevention of an arms race in outer space has a negative impact on global security. Another consequence is that these issues are increasingly being addressed outside the framework of the Conference. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted by vote in New York, is a good example. For Switzerland, it is important that the Conference should emerge from the deadlock in which it has been stuck for more than 20 years. This requires a new and pragmatic approach. The decision taken by this Conference 10 days ago is encouraging. It is now able to appoint coordinators for five subsidiary bodies. This step lays the foundations for substantive work in 2018 and we look forward to being one of the member States that will occupy the presidency. This decision provides an opportunity, in the first instance, to move gradually towards the opening of negotiations. Switzerland has always supported the opening of negotiations on the key issues of the Conference. We stand ready to contribute to the development of the elements of the treaty. Secondly, the decision opens the door to the development of politically binding agreements. This is an important pragmatic step. Thirdly, the Conference is now in a position to respond to the new technology-related strategic challenges that I mentioned earlier.

In order to make an effective contribution and address global challenges, the Conference should adopt a more open stance and involve all relevant actors. It should examine applications from States wishing to become members and involve the academic and industrial communities. Although the difficult strategic context cannot be overlooked, it is precisely in such situations that multilateral action is needed. Geneva has a dense network of expertise in the fields of arms control, humanitarian affairs, human rights, trade, health and science and is therefore uniquely placed to address those challenges. Let us use these opportunities. Let us make the most of the Conference. It is an essential instrument for achieving a more stable and peaceful world.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Cassis for his statement and for his support of the work in this august body. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Guterres and Mr. Cassis from the chamber. I will then

inform you about how we can go about this plenary high-level session without interpretation.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. Due to the work stoppage I informed you about, there will be no formal interpretation between 3 and 5 o'clock. However, it is my intention to follow what we did at the outset of this afternoon's session and allow representatives to deliver their speeches in English. Again, this is my intention in order to allow for our high-level visitors to deliver their speeches from now until the end of the meeting. Otherwise, as I said, I will have to suspend the high-level meeting this afternoon until 5 o'clock, at which point – we have been informed – interpretation will be available, but I am in your hands. If I do not hear anything against my proposal, I will suspend the meeting and go to welcome the next speaker. As I see no reaction from member States, I will now suspend the meeting to welcome His Excellency Mr. Miguel Ruiz Cabañas, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of Mexico.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I would like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Miguel Ruiz Cabañas, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of Mexico. I thank you, Mr. Ruiz Cabañas, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament and I now give you the floor.

Mr. Ruiz Cabañas (Mexico): Madam President, I was planning to deliver my speech in my beautiful Spanish, but, since that has been prevented, I will deliver it in English, which is not, as you know, my mother tongue; and so, excuse me if I do not deliver it in the best possible way.

Mexico congratulates Sweden and offers its full support to the Swedish presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Sweden and Mexico have a long history of collaboration on issues of nuclear disarmament. Thirty-five years ago, Alva Myrdal from Sweden and Alfonso García Robles from Mexico were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work on nuclear disarmament issues, in particular in this forum. In addition, this year marks the fortieth anniversary of the first special session dedicated to disarmament at which these diplomats and others had an outstanding influence and which issued the mandate of the Conference on Disarmament.

Madam President, distinguished delegates, Mexico attaches great value to diplomacy as a tool to privilege and strengthen multilateral systems and mechanisms. It is thanks to multilateral diplomacy that we have been able to join efforts as well as reach commitments and solutions to global problems and set standards that moderate national ambitions in order to safeguard international peace and security.

Today, however, the world faces increasing mistrust and criticism of multilateralism. States seem to be confronted with a dilemma: to persevere with international cooperation, building bridges of understanding; or, on the contrary, to close borders and build walls based on fear and mistrust. This dilemma is artificial and false. The defence of national interests does not contradict multilateralism. Quite the contrary, multilateral cooperation allows us to strengthen our national interests. No country, however powerful, is capable of responding alone to the enormous contemporary global challenges.

Given the high priority we attach to multilateralism, Mexico has a historical attachment to the United Nations disarmament machinery, especially the Conference on Disarmament, of which we are a founding member. Also for this reason, Mexico was vocal in pointing out, in a clear and transparent manner, the unacceptable situation that had prevailed in the Conference for the past 22 years, a time during which this forum was not able to adopt and implement its programme of work or fulfil its mandate. In those two decades, Mexico was also very proactive and constructive with recommendations to revitalize the Conference.

On 16 February, the Conference decided to establish subsidiary bodies on the topics of its agenda. At the beginning, we had some scepticism about the utility of a new deliberative exercise in this forum and its added value, considering the similar discussions

carried out at the 2012, 2014 and 2017 sessions. But Mexico did not object to the adoption of that decision; quite the contrary, we recognized that several members of the Conference attached value to this exercise. We support the work of these subsidiary bodies and we believe that they will lead the Conference to resume its substantive work. However, I must emphasize that the adoption of this decision should not become an obstacle to or distraction from the adoption of a programme of work that will allow the Conference on Disarmament to comply with the negotiating mandate it was given by the first special session on disarmament. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the Conference will be based on a single criterion: its ability to negotiate disarmament treaties and agreements. In pursuing this objective, we must openly address the fundamental issues that underlie the paralysis in the Conference, such as: (i) abuse of the consensus rule, which is used as a veto in procedural and substantive decisions; (ii) the limited membership of the Conference; and (iii) this forum's lack of openness to civil society participation which is usual in multilateral diplomacy of the twenty-first century.

The Conference on Disarmament must fulfil its mandate and not settle for a partial decision. This is for two main reasons. The first is a technical and practical reason. If the Conference devotes itself solely to deliberation, it is not fulfilling its mandate. It will not advance the normative body of disarmament and it will be duplicating the functions of other forums in the disarmament machinery, in particular, the General Assembly and the Disarmament Commission in New York. The second reason is political. In the current international conjuncture, a multilateral forum that is active but does not fulfil its mandate or work under elementary rules of democracy, inclusion and transparency becomes an example of the defects and limitations of multilateral forums, which are used by those who question the value of international cooperation. The Conference on Disarmament should be the spearhead for change and not the protector of a status quo that benefits only a few to the detriment of the collective interest.

Mexico strives for a more just, peaceful and secure model of international coexistence based on sustainable development, international cooperation, human rights and the peaceful solution of disputes, not on the use or threat of use of force. In this context, it is worrisome to hear voices that seem to justify, normalize or advocate for the use of weapons of mass destruction to guarantee their security. Mexico reiterates its total rejection of the existence, manufacture, modernization, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons by any actor and under any circumstance. Therefore, we hope that the new review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which will conclude in 2020, will result in a renewed impetus concerning the commitments and obligations that all parties to the NPT have formulated to underpin the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We call upon the nuclear-weapon States to accelerate the fulfilment of their commitments and obligations established by the Treaty, in particular, those under article VI, the 13 systematic steps for nuclear disarmament and the 2010 action plan.

In particular, Mexico makes a new call to countries whose signature or ratification is necessary for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to enter into force to do so. It also urges all the members of the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations to advance in the realization of other measures, such as the negotiation of a treaty for the prohibition of fissile materials and the production of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

All these instruments will reinforce the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It is in the collective interest to complete them with a sense of urgency.

In the same way, Mexico calls on all United Nations Members to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was opened for signature in 2017 and which my country has already signed and ratified. This historic treaty is not only a symbol of the value of multilateral diplomacy but also a sign of the interest of the majority of the international community to seek a safer and more peaceful world. Moreover, this treaty reinforces and complements all nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and instruments, making clear our common goal of achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Madam President, distinguished delegates, I reiterate the willingness of Mexico to work on the activities of this forum and to continue to strengthen it. Given the organic relationship between disarmament and peace, the Conference on Disarmament must be the spearhead to reach and sustain it.

The President: I thank Mr. Ruiz Cabañas for his statement and also for reminding us of the dedicated work of our predecessors, Mr. García Robles and Ms. Myrdal. They would very much have approved of our efforts to get the Conference on Disarmament back to work.

Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Ruiz Cabañas from the chamber and welcome His Excellency Mr. Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation of Myanmar.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I would like now to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. I thank you, Mr. Kyaw Tin, for addressing the Conference on Disarmament. You have the floor, sir.

Mr. Kyaw Tin (Myanmar): Madam President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this critical juncture.

The world today is faced with regional instabilities, intra-State conflicts with civilian suffering and discord in inter-State relations. Although the year 2017 saw the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world is becoming more and more challenging. The strengthening of reliance on nuclear deterrence and modernizing of arsenals by nuclear-weapon States and the building of capabilities by nuclear-armed States are indeed seriously undermining arms control and non-proliferation regimes. Perhaps, a second nuclear age with more actors and less stability is in the making.

Growing distrust among States, in particular between major Powers, is seriously affecting our collective security road map. We need to reverse this trend through matching confidence-building measures and political will before it becomes parallel to the level of East-West enmity and competition. In our view, a proactive multilateral approach is needed more than ever to address discord, instability and disarmament and non-proliferation challenges.

One of the most serious security challenges for the international community is maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. That has been a flashpoint whose potential dangers involve nuclear weapons and missile capabilities. It is important for Member States to comply with the provisions of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Myanmar, as a responsible member of the United Nations, is making every effort to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Recent developments such as high-level talks, Olympic diplomacy and the reopening of hotlines are signs of hope for better. Such efforts towards engagement and dialogue should be further pursued and encouraged.

While use of chemical weapons is not yet diminished, acts of violent extremism continue to pose a threat to our populations and affect us on a daily basis. At the same time, terrorism is reaching new places and triggering violence and instability.

We should also be proactive in addressing new security challenges. Cybersecurity threats, incidents, vulnerabilities and how we might address them collectively and effectively were debated heatedly at the recent Munich Security Conference. In many instances, disinformation, fake photos and news and other forms of manipulation are exacerbating a difficult situation, thereby misleading the international community and preventing us from making the right decisions for solutions. Violations of cybersecurity and the misuse of cybertechnology by individuals, criminals and terrorist organizations, or even States, have a direct bearing not only on our security but also on our day-to-day activities. Policymakers, experts and giant media empires must come together – sooner rather than

later – to cope with this challenge. The Conference on Disarmament should keep its doors open to this issue.

Madam President, allow me to turn to the sustained non-proliferation efforts of Myanmar. While we pursue national reconciliation and peace, development and the democratization process, we have been able to make progress also on non-proliferation as part of our reform process. The signature of an additional protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the ratification of the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty took place in a four-year timespan between 2013 and 2016.

In preparing our way forward, Myanmar was able to hold national capacity-building, induction and outreach workshops on the State system of accounting for and control of nuclear material; on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004); and on small arms and light weapons. These sustained efforts, despite capacity constraints, were made possible in close collaboration with and with support from international partners, including Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the European Union, the United States and Australia, and relevant treaty bodies. Our efforts in disarmament and non-proliferation are continuing.

Myanmar continues to attach great importance to – and believes in – the potential of the Conference on Disarmament, which was established in 1979 as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community following the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978. As a member, Myanmar is always ready to contribute to bringing the Conference back to life and having it deliver on its mandate. Last year, I gave my support to our delegation to the Conference for it to put forth its best efforts as the Chair of the working group on the way ahead. It is regrettable that the useful and substantive discussions of the working group did not lead to consensus recommendations. The highest priority on the disarmament agenda for Myanmar continues to be nuclear disarmament. Therefore, Myanmar calls for the Conference to substantively deal with nuclear disarmament in its programme of work this year. Pending the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and a moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, a treaty banning fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is the next logical step in the 13 practical steps on non-proliferation and disarmament agreed at the 2000 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.

As they have been defined as core issues, negative security assurances and the prevention of an arms race in outer space deserve our serious consideration in the work of the Conference. New challenges, such as lethal autonomous systems, cybersecurity threats – as I have mentioned earlier – and chemical and biological terrorism, should also find their way into our work as part of reframing and modernizing long-standing disarmament and non-proliferation priorities.

Against this backdrop, we welcome the decision adopted under the Sri Lankan presidency, on 16 February 2018, establishing five subsidiary bodies on the agenda items in order to build understanding on the areas of commonalities, including technical discussions, and to consider effective measures for negotiations. I am confident that, under your able leadership, our efforts will be more crystallized in the days to come.

With greater political will, flexibility and accommodation by all member States of the Conference, we would be able to break the impasse and translate our security concerns into a programme of work. I wish you all and the Conference the best of luck and success in this important mission.

Looking ahead, we consider the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference in April a welcome opportunity to gauge and enhance the balanced implementation of the three pillars of the Treaty. We must make the most of it.

It is also timely to convene a high-level conference on nuclear disarmament in 2018 in order to enhance progress towards the achievement of a nuclear weapons convention – a global treaty to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The nexus between security and development is obvious. The argument between security and development as two different sets of activities is subsiding. Peaceful and prosperous societies for future generations means a better security environment for them. To make that happen, ever-growing, excessive military expenditure should be channelled to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Our wisdom should prevail over our might.

The President: I thank Mr. Kyaw Tin for his statement and for the kind words in support of the President. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Kyaw Tin from the chamber and to welcome His Excellency Mr. Simas Magalhães, Vice-Minister for Multilateral Political Affairs of Brazil, and escort him to the Council Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. The presidency got a bit entangled since the next speaker was actually already in the room. It is with great joy that I warmly welcome our distinguished guest, His Excellency Mr. Simas Magalhães, Vice-Minister for Multilateral Political Affairs of Brazil. I thank you for addressing us here at the Conference and I now give you the floor.

Mr. Simas Magalhães (Brazil): Madam President, I am greatly honoured to be here participating in this session of the Conference on Disarmament. I was looking at the clock, waiting for 5 o'clock when the interpreters might be back, but – I am sorry – you will have to listen to my statement in English. If the interpreters were here, I could have perhaps tried in "Portuñol", but I beg for your understanding. I will read this statement in English.

Madam President, I congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament on behalf of Sweden and you may rest assured of the full cooperation of Brazil in the exercise of your functions. The presence with us earlier this afternoon of the Secretary-General of the United Nations deserves to be commended. It raises the profile of this year's high-level segment. Brazil welcomes the Secretary-General's articulated vision for our renewed and multilateral disarmament agenda – one that is adjusted to the challenges of the twenty-first century. This is a timely contribution which brings needed encouragement and guidance to the work of this august body. Though we have been unable to make headway for over two decades now, the Conference on Disarmament still lies at the core of the raison d'être of the United Nations.

The Conference must urgently be reactivated so that we can collectively work to prevent the world from slipping into a new normal of high-risk, high-stakes strategic confrontation. The one thing we can all agree on is that the international security environment is rapidly deteriorating, mainly due to a regressive validation of the role of nuclear weapons by possessor States and also nuclear brinkmanship. In our view, it defies common sense to imagine that strategic stability can be promoted through permanent and unaccountable military build-up, particularly when it is led by the modernization of nuclear arsenals and their means of delivery. It certainly does not make any one of us feel safer. Quite the contrary.

As to the absence of movement, it sometimes may seem easier to lay motionless behind entrenched positions for another indefinite period of time; but the absence of movement is a risky gamble. Disarmament bodies cannot afford two more decades of paralysis out of lack of engagement or lack of political will to respond to changed world conditions. Furthermore, today's strategic turbulence is exacerbated by rapidly evolving warfare capacities on land and sea, in the air and outer space, in the cyberworld and in the privatization of military technology development; and there is a growing threat posed also by non-State actors. The international community is witnessing a quantum leap in strategic capacities that deeply affects real and perceived projections of power.

The Conference on Disarmament may have been unfortunately at a standstill, but the world order is not waiting for us to react. The world order is moving on. Rapidly evolving science and technology breaks new ground in terms of what is militarily possible, almost on a daily basis. It challenges our post-World War notions of compliance with a higher ethical and moral bottom line – a bottom line that we all together built under the aegis of the

United Nations to protect humanity from self-destruction, and that is reflected in the common acquis of international humanitarian law and international law of human rights. So we find ourselves now in dire need of a bold, pragmatic view of disarmament that seeks to save lives and, hopefully, to save humanity. Such a pragmatic approach has been outlined by the Secretary-General and his High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and we are deeply thankful for their efforts. Brazil stands ready to contribute to a good-faith consensus-building effort.

This debate comes in the wake of a worsening security environment. However, this debate also pays heed to small but significant signs of improved will among the United Nations membership towards a new middle ground, one that we can together build upon.

The Conference membership deserves to be recognized for its decision to move ahead with substantive work under a structure of five subsidiary bodies covering all the items on the Conference's agenda. We also commend all the past efforts that pursued the adoption of a fully fledged programme of work containing clear negotiating mandates for legally binding instruments. However, so far this has proved to be an ever elusive aspiration. It is against this backdrop that the decision last January, under the able leadership of the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka, Ambassador Aryasinha, can be truly described as a breakthrough in the work of the Conference. It provides a much-needed wind of opportunity to resume urgently needed dialogue among nuclear-weapon States, possessor States and non-nuclear-weapon States and thereby deepen understanding of issues that are critical to global peace and security and pave the way to negotiations at the earliest. It is true that deep-rooted disagreements persist, but it is our responsibility as members to bridge national positions and national concerns in the name of a world less vulnerable to strategic risk and more respectful of humanitarian ethics and human rights. Scepticism will get us nowhere.

Madam President, Brazil participated in the historic process that led to the adoption and opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We were together there when President Temer was the first to sign the Treaty. We are extremely proud of the results achieved. We followed in the footsteps of what had already been accomplished in respect of chemical and biological weapons. The Prohibition Treaty levels the normative playing field for all weapons of mass destruction in terms of which further steps towards their destruction and elimination can be taken. I assure you this is not an initiative borne out of frustration, as some wish to describe it. This represents a very concrete objective and successful action – a political action – which was taken by over a third of the United Nations membership to address a legal gap that allowed for the existence of normative ambivalence regarding the acceptability of the most destructive and inhumane of all of the weapons of mass destruction. The mere existence and constant modernization of these weapons poses an increasing risk to international peace and security and diverts resources away from our common Sustainable Development Goals and overall global welfare. This normative ambivalence regarding nuclear weapons also allows for unilateral projections of power and proliferation ambitions of specific members of the international community to the detriment of all the rest.

Among the other – the majority of – States, Brazil is bound by and committed to its status as a non-nuclear-weapon State under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as per our Constitution and in accordance with regional, bilateral and multilateral agreements we have negotiated and entered into. Most of the proponents of the Prohibition Treaty – as non-nuclear-weapon States under the NPT and under the umbrella of the nuclear-weapon-free zone agreements to which they are parties – already abide by obligations which are equivalent in scope. All of us under these agreements are still waiting for nuclear-weapon States and possessor States to provide, in exchange, commensurate full negative security assurances without preconditions and without interpretation clauses – assurances to the effect that we will not be threatened or attacked with nuclear weapons.

We are therefore slightly unimpressed by the negative reactions to the Prohibition Treaty. On the other hand, we specifically welcome the active support for its negotiation from the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), and the over 400 civil society entities ICAN represents from around the world. We need to open up the disarmament debate. We need to improve conditions for a

greater diversity of actors to actively participate in contributing, particularly here in the Conference on Disarmament.

Some measures are well known and long established. They include the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; of course, a treaty on fissile materials for nuclear weapons; the review of nuclear military doctrines, in particular with regard to negative security assurances; and progress on other fronts such as transparency, confidence-building, verification and, ultimately, a comprehensive legal framework to completely eliminate nuclear weapons, which can be a final convention or a set of instruments legally kept by the Prohibition Treaty.

These initiatives have been on the Conference's agenda for many years awaiting an opportunity to be effectively considered. We feel it is our collective responsibility to pursue them now with the utmost resolve, whether or not we are supporters of the Prohibition Treaty.

Madam President, Brazil believes in preventing the weaponization of outer space and that space should remain the territory of peaceful and scientific exploration for the common good of humankind. We have witnessed in recent years a series of breakthroughs in space exploration of far-reaching implications, including security-wise. We therefore expect the Conference to build upon existing commitments, such as the Outer Space Treaty. Progress should be pursued in synergy with the wider multilateral framework for the use of outer space, particularly the recently established group of governmental experts to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We also look forward to the upcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference, which will be held in Geneva in two months' time. Given the lack of results at the last Review Conference, we should use the time productively to lay now the groundwork for consensus to emerge in 2020 – a consensus which confirms and builds upon previous commitments, particularly with regard to nuclear disarmament. The upcoming high-level conference on nuclear disarmament will be an opportunity for States to take stock of developments and delineate alternatives on the way forward at the highest level.

Rising tensions between nuclear-armed States, the emergence of non-State actors and even territorial disputes have come back with a vengeance. In times like these, nations must rise above political short-sightedness and must look for new paradigms and new solutions. It was exactly in this way that the United Nations itself was created, as was the disarmament machinery.

Increased recourse to unilateralism and bellicose rhetoric threatens dialogue and threatens compromise. It is the role of bodies such as this to provide the counterpoint and a pathway to understanding and cooperation. There are no solutions to the current international dilemmas – and, in particular, the dilemmas in the area of disarmament and security – that can be achieved by any one State actor. We must all strive to move ahead collectively. The multilateral system is the arena where we can do this together.

The President: I thank Mr. Simas Magalhães for his statement and for his kind support of our work here in the Conference on Disarmament. Allow me now to suspend the meeting for a short moment in order to escort Mr. Simas Magalhães from the chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I now invite our colleague Ambassador Robert Wood, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the Conference on Disarmament, to address the Conference.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Madam President, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for addressing the Conference on Disarmament today and to welcome the ministers and colleagues from capitals who have joined us. Their presence reaffirms that the Conference on Disarmament remains an important forum for addressing the most pressing security challenges we face.

We must look reality in the eye and see the world as it is and not as we wish it to be. For decades, the United States has led the world in efforts to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons. We have reduced our nuclear stockpile by over 85 per cent since the height of the cold war and we have not deployed any new nuclear capabilities for the past two decades. Unfortunately, during that time other States have done the opposite. In contrast to the United States, they have vigorously pursued the modernization of their existing nuclear forces. They have increased their nuclear stockpiles. They have even developed and fielded new nuclear capabilities. Today's environment is more dynamic, complex and threatening than any since the end of the cold war. It is characterized by great Powers and rogue States increasingly challenging the international order. They are violating borders, and they are increasing their ability to threaten the United States and our allies.

The fact that the security environment has deteriorated is no longer in dispute. The United States has outlined these developments in great detail, and we have identified the States responsible in our National Security Strategy, our Nuclear Posture Review and, recently, in this very chamber.

In the light of these developments, it is important to recall that, since the end of the Second World War, nuclear deterrence has played a critical role in deterring aggression and preserving peace. For centuries prior to the era of nuclear deterrence, periodic and catastrophic wars among great Powers were the norm. These wars were waged with ever more destructive weapons and inflicted ever higher casualties. It is clear that the underlying causes of great Power conflict have not gone away and the conditions that might make possible the global elimination of nuclear weapons are not present today.

In response to the deteriorating security environment, the United States is taking numerous steps – outlined in our 2018 Nuclear Posture Review – to bolster nuclear deterrence and sustain a safe, secure and effective arsenal. These steps in no way lower the nuclear threshold of the United States. Rather, the Nuclear Posture Review makes clear to adversaries that strategies based on limited nuclear escalation will both fail and risk intolerable costs. By correcting this potential misperception, the Nuclear Posture Review raises the threshold and makes nuclear use less likely. Our intention is to reduce the risk that others might miscalculate or gamble that they have some exploitable advantage. The objective is to make clear it is not in others' interest to use nuclear weapons.

Any expectation for near-term progress on nuclear disarmament is unrealistic in light of the range of challenges I just described. While now is not the time for bold new disarmament initiatives, there should be no doubt that the United States remains firmly committed to its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, including article VI. We also remain committed to arms control agreements that are verifiable, enforceable and enhance security. Even in these difficult times, the United States will seek the development of measures that may be effective in creating the conditions for future nuclear disarmament negotiations. The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains an aspirational goal for the United States.

As outlined in our National Security Strategy, the approach of the United States is one of "principled realism". That realism forces us to recognize the challenges that face us and to address them head on. Further progress on nuclear disarmament and a strengthened non-proliferation regime require that we improve the international security environment. It will not be easy, but there is no other path.

Madam President, ministers and colleagues, in confronting the challenges we face, you will find a partner in the United States. We look forward to working with you to help create the conditions for further progress on nuclear disarmament.

The President: I thank Ambassador Wood for his statement and for his support to our work. I now invite our colleague Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, to deliver a statement.

Mr. Gill (India): Madam President, it is a great pleasure for my country to see you chair the Conference on Disarmament. Sweden and India have been comrades-in-arms on many disarmament issues in the past and we pledge you our full cooperation.

It is also a great pleasure to see the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, and it was an honour to listen to the address by the Secretary-General earlier today.

Excellencies, distinguished friends, my delegation remains convinced that enduring solutions to our common problems of peace and security can only be found through multilateralism and a continued commitment to the ideals enshrined in the United Nations Charter. The United Nations continues to have a central role and the primary responsibility for advancing multilateral disarmament. In this regard, we welcome the intention of the United Nations Secretary-General to develop a new initiative for restoring the role of the United Nations in disarmament and to forge a new momentum for nuclear disarmament.

The disarmament machinery established by the first special session on disarmament has been criticized in recent years for its lack of substantive outcomes. Developments in the past year have underlined the continued importance of this machinery, in particular the triad of the First Committee, the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament. If we look back at what has been achieved since April last year, we can note that there is a certain trend, there is a certain accumulation of positive developments, whether it was the first adoption of a substantive outcome by consensus in the United Nations Disarmament Commission after a gap of 18 years last year, or the consensus outcome at the Biological Weapons Convention Meeting of States Parties in December last year or, indeed, the agreement on the agenda for a fourth special session on disarmament. The tide therefore is turning and it is our responsibility to pull together on the oars. Notwithstanding the current difficulties, the Conference on Disarmament – in the historical sense of a limited membership negotiating body on disarmament – remains a unique institution. It brings together in full equality and responsibility all militarily significant States, in particular all States possessing nuclear weapons. It has the mandate, the membership and the rules for embarking on negotiations of legally binding instruments of universal application that can strengthen international peace and security.

My delegation is particularly pleased with the decision adopted on 16 February, under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha of Sri Lanka, to advance the substantive work of the Conference. It may seem like a modest step in the light of recent history and it may still be derailed by security exclusivism and trust deficits. However, if all of us engage in good faith in each and every subsidiary body established by the decision, we can deliver on the triple mandate accorded to each of them, namely, reaching understanding on areas of commonality; deepening technical discussions, including through the participation of technical experts, and thus broadening areas of agreement; as well as considering effective measures, including legal instruments for negotiations. We hope that the Conference will begin negotiations on one or more legally binding instruments either by building on this decision or through a programme of work with one or more negotiating mandates.

There are other opportunities this year to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects, as well as other pressing items on the international security agenda. A high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament will be held in New York from 14 to 16 May upon an initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement. We hope that we can use this platform to rebuild trust among all States and create common ground on the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

For its part, India remains committed to universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. We support the proposal for the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention in the Conference on Disarmament. Without prejudice to the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, we support the immediate commencement of negotiation in the Conference of a fissile material cut-off treaty on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We will also support measures to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in security policies and doctrines, including through measures such as de-alerting and a global no-first-use agreement.

The high-level expert preparatory group on a fissile material cut-off treaty and two new groups of governmental experts – on nuclear disarmament verification and on the prevention of an arms race in outer space – will be meeting this year. All three issues are

among the core agenda items of the Conference on Disarmament which will be considered by the subsidiary bodies set up by the recent decision. It is important to pull together these strands of substantive work and weave them into a coherent whole.

This year is also an important opportunity to review the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Illicit small arms and light weapons are mass killers. They continue to circulate in grey markets and be used by terrorists and international criminals to wreak mayhem. We expect to make important progress on combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons under the able presidency of France.

My delegation is pleased that there is now an opportunity to address emerging issues under a formal subsidiary body of the Conference on Disarmament. We welcome the United Nations Secretary-General's interest in new technologies and their impact on international security and disarmament discussions. My delegation was pleased to sponsor a new initiative at the last session of the General Assembly, and resolution 72/28 on the role of science and technology is an opportunity for Member States to contribute their views on this important and highly relevant topic. We hope that these views will help the Secretary-General prepare a comprehensive report on the issue for the next session of the General Assembly.

We are also pleased that science and technology issues will feature in the first set of meetings of experts under the new intersessional programme adopted by the latest Meeting of States Parties of the Biological Weapons Convention in December 2017. The meetings this year are an opportunity to, I quote, "be prudently creative in finding ways to strengthen this important international framework". This was recently conveyed to us by our Chair for the 2018 Meeting through his letter, which starts, in a sense, the substantive preparations for the meetings in August and December 2018.

Likewise, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons will continue to build on the consensus outcome of November 2017, and we expect that the relevant discussion in the Conference on Disarmament will take place without prejudice to the work in the framework of the Convention on the issue of lethal autonomous weapon systems.

To conclude, Madam President, this is an important moment. If we keep the focus on substance, display the necessary flexibility and work together using the tools at our disposal, we can revitalize the disarmament machinery and advance our collective security. In an interdependent and multipolar world, we have no alternative but to strengthen the multilateral ideal and its institutions, including this august body.

The President: I thank Ambassador Singh Gill for his statement and for the kind words of support to the presidency. I now invite our colleague Ambassador Fu Cong, Permanent Representative of China to the Conference on Disarmament, to take the floor.

Mr. Fu Cong (China): Madam President, first let me congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We pledge our full support to you. I would also like to warmly welcome and pay tribute to the presence of and statement by Secretary-General Guterres and the other distinguished guests.

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. The presence of Secretary-General Guterres at the Conference on Disarmament at this special historic moment reflects the great importance he attaches to disarmament issues and his resolute support for the Conference's work. Since last year, the Secretary-General has been advancing the reform of the United Nations system and has conducted wide consultations to formulate his agenda for disarmament. China appreciates these efforts. We hope and are convinced that the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament, in keeping with the times, will contribute to reaching a common understanding among all parties and inject new vigour into the process of international arms control and disarmament.

Madam President, arms control and disarmament are closely linked with international peace and security and they are mutually reinforcing. At present, international relations are tense with successive regional conflicts and the spread of terrorism, and the international security situation is increasingly grim and complex. At the same time, the

impact of scientific and technological development on international security is becoming more prominent. Addressing properly the old problems and new challenges in the field of arms control and non-proliferation so as to increase general security for all countries is a common task of the international community.

In our view, it is necessary to focus our work on the following areas.

First, proceeding from reality and steadily advancing nuclear disarmament, China has always stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. We have always kept our commitment to no first use of nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances and to unconditional no-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In our view, reducing the role of nuclear weapons in national security doctrines and abandoning the nuclear deterrent policy based on the first use of nuclear weapons constitutes the most practical and the feasible nuclear disarmament measure at present.

Negotiating and concluding a legally binding international instrument on negative security assurances should be the priority for nuclear disarmament. Deliberations and negotiations on nuclear disarmament should proceed step by step under the existing framework of authoritative, authentic mechanisms in accordance with the principle of undiminished security for all. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons undermines the authority and effectiveness of the international non-proliferation regime based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and does not constitute new customary international law, and has no legal binding force on countries that have not acceded to it.

Secondly, we should keep up with the times and properly tackle challenges associated with scientific and technological development. At present, scientific and technological development is accelerating, which, while facilitating the economic and social development of all countries, brings many risks and challenges. Scientific and technological development in areas such as outer space, the Internet, artificial intelligence, and biology and chemistry will bring great uncertainties to the international strategic balance and stability and also to the international effort to combat terrorism. Relevant international norms are lagging behind or conspicuously non-existent. As prevention is better than cure, the international community should intensify preventive diplomacy to effectively meet the challenges posed by scientific and technological development.

It is our hope that the Conference on Disarmament can start as soon as possible negotiation of a legally binding instrument on the basis of the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space proposed jointly by China and Russia.

Thirdly, we should uphold the principle of inclusiveness and improving the international non-proliferation regime. Over the years, certain countries have practised unilateralism and observed double standards in the field of non-proliferation; that seriously undermines the authority of the international non-proliferation regime and, at the same time, increases the difficulty of resolving regional problems of non-proliferation. More than 20 years after the end of the cold war, the export control system for international non-proliferation remains dominated by an exclusive and discriminatory small group. This practice of excluding the majority of countries not only impairs the right of all countries to the peaceful use of science and technology but also can hardly ensure the effectiveness and the sustainability of the non-proliferation regime. With the accelerating development of science and technology and the increasing threat from non-State entities, this practice will be increasingly unsustainable. In the new situation, the establishment of a multilateral export control system with equal and universal participation of all countries should be the direction of efforts for the international community.

Fourthly, combining continuity with innovation and revitalized disarmament mechanisms. Maintaining multilateral disarmament mechanisms such as the Conference on Disarmament is a common responsibility of the international community. The principle of consensus is a safeguard both for undiminished security for all countries and for concluding international treaties acceptable to all parties, and it must be upheld. Rushing for quick results or starting new forums will only create a false sense of prosperity, aggravate

division of the international community and resolve no real problems. At the same time, the Conference on Disarmament should also follow the requirements of scientific development and global governance, update its agenda items, enable more countries to take part in its work and continuously increase its universality and inclusiveness so as to inject new dynamism into its work.

China will unswervingly pursue the road of peaceful development and vigorously promote the healthy development of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts to make its due contribution to the establishment of a world with comprehensive security.

The President: I thank Ambassador Fu Cong for his statement and for his support to our work here in the Conference on Disarmament. Before I give the floor to Ms. Alice Guitton, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament, I will briefly suspend the meeting for a few minutes until the interpreters return at 5 p.m.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. I now give the floor to our colleague Ambassador Alice Guitton, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament.

Ms. Guitton (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Madam President, and thank you for this break, which allows France to express itself in its own language. Within the United Nations, this is of vital importance to us. I would first like to extend my sincere congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and to wish you every success. You may count on my country's full support as you carry out your mandate.

Through you, Madam President, and through the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, whom I warmly welcome, I would also like to say how significant it has been for us to have had the Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, among us this afternoon. His statement was a very timely and powerful reminder of our collective responsibility in the pursuit of a global multilateral disarmament agenda that brings us all together and contributes effectively to the prevention of tension and the strengthening of international peace, security and stability. France fully shares the Secretary-General's view that the global security environment has generally deteriorated and that there is an imperative need for us to step up our efforts to address this deterioration. Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation measures, as long as they are firmly rooted in the realities of the strategic and security context, can and must contribute to these goals. As in other areas, disarmament cannot be decreed but must be constructed with patience, perseverance and a realistic outlook. To bring about this goal, we must re-establish a constructive multilateral dialogue that, unfortunately, we have somewhat lost sight of over time. Such a dialogue must be based on respect for the specific security interests of each country and region, taking into account their great diversity and growing complexity. Collective security can be built only on the basis of mutual understanding and trust, which, in turn, are fuelled by a desire for dialogue and cooperation. It is also a question of living up to our collective commitment to multilateralism and the preservation of non-proliferation norms. As the President of the French Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, pointed out at the seventy-second General Assembly last September, there is nothing more effective than multilateralism in today's world. Because our greatest challenges – the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, global warming, immigration, disparities in development, violations of international humanitarian law and human rights – are global, they must be addressed by global responses within a multilateral framework. Consequently, it is essential to consolidate the architecture of international law and the authority and credibility of existing non-proliferation norms. Today more than ever, the non-proliferation regimes on which our collective security is based, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, are all under severe strain or are even being seriously undermined. The international community must take stock of the urgent and serious threats posed by proliferation-related crises and respond to them with the utmost firmness: reaffirming the inviolability of the non-proliferation rule, and holding the perpetrators of

possible violations to account, must be a priority for all. These are the goals that my country continues to pursue, both on the ground and in multilateral forums, including the Security Council. Lastly, it must be said that respect for the rule of consensus is essential for ensuring that commitments are freely entered into and implemented and that progress is made towards the universalization of decisions taken.

As I said in my opening remarks, the strategic environment in which we operate is characterized by increasing instability and unpredictability. But what does this mean? In such a difficult context, the solution is not to turn inwards, or to simply do nothing, no matter how tempting that may be. On the contrary, it is essential that fresh efforts be made to communicate, cooperate, ease tensions and facilitate progress through greater trust and transparency. It is on these concrete and pragmatic foundations that France will continue to play an active role in resolving crises, strengthening international security and making gradual and realistic progress in all areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In that regard, France remains committed to pursuing the goal of a nuclear weapon-free world, when security conditions allow. It remains committed to the implementation of a progressive and realistic approach to nuclear disarmament, of which the logical next steps include the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the launch of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

You can also count on my country's unwavering commitment to taking resolute steps towards disarmament that saves lives, as mentioned by the Secretary-General, particularly in the field of conventional weapons. Every day, there are more and more victims of illicit arms trafficking and improvised explosive devices, including among civilians. These weapons, whether they are in the hands of State or non-State actors, fuel terrorism and currently represent the main threat to the security and prosperity of societies on every continent. In that regard, France fully intends to assume and commit itself to its responsibilities as President of the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms. The same obviously applies to the mandates that my country is honoured to carry out in 2018 under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty. These various commitments are part of the broader framework within which France engages with the rest of the world, acting out of a resolute determination to promote and protect international peace and security so that together – and this is the meaning of multilateralism – we may build a safer world for all. This is a well-understood, collectively shared interest and, at the same time, a common responsibility that each of us must honour.

The encouraging decisions taken recently within the Conference and the United Nations Disarmament Commission show that gradual progress can be made, enabling our disarmament forums to resume, as they should, substantial and effective work. In this regard also, you can count on France being fully committed to moving forward.

The President: I thank Ambassador Guitton for her statement and for her support. Would any other delegation like to take the floor? That does not seem to be the case. This, then, concludes our business for this afternoon. The next meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place tomorrow as scheduled, at 10 a.m., when we will hear addresses by Slovenia, Spain, Senegal, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Canada, Egypt and Venezuela during the morning meeting. We will come back to you with the list of speakers for the afternoon.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.